DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 193 FL 014 256

AUTHOR	Wing, Barbara H., Comp.; Mayewski, Sandi, Comp.
TITLE	Oral Proficiency Testing in Russian.
SPONS AGENCY	New Hampshire Univ., Durham.
PUB DATE	15 Oct 83
NOTE	45p.; Compiled for the Northern New England Chapter of the Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Language. Handbook presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (San Francisco, CA, November 24-26, 1983).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Cultural Awareness; Interviews; Language Proficiency; *Language Tests; *Measurement Techniques; *Oral Language; Professional Associations; Questioning Techniques; *Russian; *Second Language Instruction; Teaching Guides; Test Items
IDENTIFIERS	*Oral Proficiency Testing

ABSTRACT

A handbook compiled for use in a one-day workshop on oral proficiency testing for teachers of Russian gives an overview of oral proficiency assessment principles and the available techniques. One section explains the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages/Educational Testing Service (ACTFL/ETS) Oral Proficiency Interview process and scale. Another section discusses the oral proficiency testing needs in Russian, focusing on tester training opportunities, tester proficiency, Russian-specific guidelines for the ACTFL/ETS test, the Russian grammar grid, the role of culture in the interview and rating, and Russian-specific situations for use in the interview. Models and instruments used in familiarization and training workshops are described in a final section, including: (1) a graphic comparison of the kinds of language proficiency scales available; (2) Interagency Language Roundtable speaking definitions; (3) the academic (ACTFL/ETS) rating scale; (4) a functional trisection model of oral proficiency scales using function, content, and accuracy as assessment criteria; (5) the Foreign Service Institute's chart of proficiency levels; (6) the four phases of the oral interview; (7) general structure of the interview; (8) question types for each level of the ACTFL/ETS test; (9) ACTFL/ETS testing protocol; and (10) the ACTFL/ETS provisional generic proficiency guidelines for speaking, listening, reading, and writing at all levels. (MSE)

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ORAL PROFICIENCY TESTING

IN

RUSSIAN

A Handbook compiled by

Barbara H. Wing and Sandi Mayewski
University of New Hampshire

for the

Northern New England Chapter of the
Association of Teachers of Slavic and East
European Languages

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PREFACE

This handbook was compiled for use in a one-day familiarization workshop to acquaint Russian professors with the principles and procedures of oral proficiency assessment. Further training, through intensive four- or five-day workshops and post-workshop activities, is necessary to become proficient in the use of the techniques. Information regarding such training is available from the compilers of the handbook or from Judith Liskin-Gasparro, Educational Testing Service (20-E),. Princeton, NJ 08541.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This handbook is a compilation of materials, used with permission, from the growing bibliography of materials on oral proficiency testing. The primary source is Appendix A of Organizing and Conducting an Oral Proficiency Workshop by Judith Liskin-Gasparro, Educational Testing Service, and David V. Hiple, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Barbara H. Wing prepared the narrative sections that treat oral proficiency evaluation techniques as applicable to all languages. The section relating specifically to the use of the techniques in Russian was prepared by Sandi Mayewski. Role-playing situations were developed by Robert Baker, Arna Bronstein, Cindy Martin, and Sandi Mayewski under the auspices of PROJECT OPT, a research project funded under the International Research and Studies Program of Title VI of the U. S. Department of Education.

We would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Pardee Lowe, Jr., of the CIA Language School, and Judith Liskin-Gasparro, of the Educational Testing Service, to the advancement of oral proficiency evaluation in academic settings. As developers and trainers par excellence, they have made a significant impact on foreign language teaching in the United States.

Funds for this handbook and the familiarization workshop conducted on October 15, 1983, were supplied by the Central University Research Fund of the University of New Hampshire.

I. Oral Proficiency Testing: An Overview

In the post-Sputnik era, "language for communication" became a major goal of foreign language programs in the United States. Techniques and materials for developing oral skills began to replace more traditional approaches to modern language teaching in classrooms at all levels. To achieve the goal of communication, however, foreign languge educators realized that evaluation plays as important a role in the teaching/learning process as curriculum development and classroom instructional methods.

During the same period of time, governmental agencies, such as the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), were addressing the problem of assessing the functional language ability of candidates for government positions by means of oral proficiency testing. The result was the oral proficiency interview, a testing procedure that has been endorsed by the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) which represents approximately 30 government agencies. This procedure, which consists of a structured oral interview rated on a scale of 0 ("no functional language ability") to 5 ("ability equal to that of an educated native speaker of the language") is used to evaluate individuals without regard to how, when or where the proficiency was developed. (See pp. 17-18 for complete definitions of the levels of the ILR scale.)

In 1979, the publication of the Report of the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies served as a catalyst to the academic community. In response to the Commission's recommendation that language proficiency goals and guidelines be established, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language initiated several projects

related to oral proficiency testing. The primary results of these projects was the Academic (ACTFL/ETS) Oral Proficiency Interview and Rating Scale.

The ACTFL/ETS Interview and Rating Scale are decribed in Section II of this Handbook. Readers are advised that the explanation is intended to serve as an introduction and not a complete explication of the techniques. Supervised training, which includes intensive practice in interviewing and rating, is necessary before the procedures can be used for evaluation purposes.

II. The ACTFL/ETS Oral Proficiency Interview

The ACTFL/ETS Oral Proficiency Interview is a modification of the ILR interview process that reflects reasonable expectations for proficiency development in academic settings. Based on research (see Carroll and Clark, "The Foreign Language Attainments of Language Majors in the Senior Year," in Foreign Language Annals, 1967, 3) and experience with the ILR scale, The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language and the Educational Testing Service expanded the lower ends of the ILR scale (0-3) to achieve a better measure of discrimination in the ranges most commonly achieved by students in classroom learning situations.

The ACTFL/ETS oral proficiency evaluation process consists of an interview phase and a rating phase. While experienced interviewers may interview and rate simultaneously, the interview is often taped and subsequently rated. The rating scale not only is the instrument for evaluating the proficiency of the candidate but also affects the development of the interview itself.

The rating scale

The rating scale consists of ranges of increasingly larger increments on a scale of Novice-Low to Superior (0 to 3 on the ILR scale). Specific descriptions for each of the levels of proficiency are found in the definitions of the Academic Rating Scale (see pp. 19-21). As illustrated in the Functional Trisection (see p. 22), each level of the scale takes into account the function, context, and accuracy of the candidate's speech. These three categories are further delineated in the elaboration of the Trisection (see pp. 23-25).

In conducting and evaluating an interview, raters look for the highest level of sustained performance as evidenced by patterns of strengths and weaknesses. Use of the "high" and "Plus" categories indicates that the candidate is able to perform most of the functions of the next level but not with the consistency required for assignment to that level.

The interview

The interview is a structured conversation that enables the rater to assess what the candidate can do and what the candidate cannot do when speaking the target language. It consists of four phases: warm-up, level check, probes, and wind-up (see pp. 27-28). The testing protocol (see pp. 30-31) provides a check list for the interviewer in the process of conducting the interview. Specific question types (see p. 29) appropriate to each level require that the candidate produce evidence of understanding as well as speaking.

The use of a role-playing situation places the candidate in a "real-life" situation. It requires the candidate to initiate utterances, to ask questions, and to respond to complications that may arise in the conversations. Examples of situations especially designed for use in the interviews with Russian candidates are found on pp. 11-12.

Implications for foreign language education

The ACTFL/ETS oral proficiency interview is designed to provide a measure of functional language ability, regardless of how the language has been learned or acquired. Because it was developed from the ILR scale, it is fully compatible with that scale. The ratings derived from the interview, therefore, are appropriate for use in academic and governmental situations. It is expected that as the procedures are more widely applied

and more qualified testers are certified, the technique will be used in all circumstances requiring an assessment of oral proficiency.

The oral proficiency interview has the potential for making a positive impact on other aspects of foreign language education. In the area of curriculum development, classroom teaching techniques and materials development, trained testers are already incorporating the procedures into the instructional phase of their courses both at the college and secondary school levels. In addition, proficiency in the area of listening, reading, writing and culture has been defined in the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines. The provisional generic descriptions for all the skills are found on pp. 32-41.

Training for interviewing and rating

A one- or two-day familiarization workshop will acquaint prospective users of the ACTFL/ETS Oral Proficiency Interview and Rating Scale with the rationale and techniques. Attendance at an intensive training workshop of four or five days, followed by preparation and critique of a series of interviews, is necessary to become fully knowledgeable and qualified to conduct and rate interviews.

III. Oral Proficiency Testing in Russian

The Slavic academic community has only recently begun its involvement in the area of Oral Proficiency Testing. Since we are newcomers to this field, much work still needs to be done in areas relating specifically to Russian. While French, German and Spanish instructors have had several opportunities to participate in four-day workshops in order to train future testers, the Slavic community has had few such opportunities. If we are to take full advantage of this assessment technique, we must expose our teaching profession to the rationale and function of testing for proficiency. We must also have the opportunity to train testers. While we proceed in this direction, several areas need to be addressed:

(1) Opportunities available for training testers in Russian

(2) The minimum level of proficiency of the testers themselves

(3) Russian specific guidelines for the ACTFL/ETS Proficiency Guidelines

(4) Russian Grammar Grid

(5) Role of culture in the interview and rating

(6) Russian-specific situations for use in the interview

While the following discussion raises some of these questions, it is neither meant to be prescriptive nor does it attempt to address all the Russian specific problems.

Functional Trisection

The Functional Trisection appears to be one of the most useful and most easily applicable tools for testing in Russian. Until language-specific guidelines are published, one must rate the general tasks a student can

perform in the language, the topics or subject area he/she can function in and measure the acceptability and/or accuracy with which he/she can convey it. These are general criteria and are significantly easier to apply to Russian. The Functional Trisection, however, does not take into account the Plus categories and, therefore, is not meant to be used as anything but a general set of guidelines.

The Interview

The structure of the interview in Russian is the same as for any other language. Where Russian may differ is in the role of culture and the psychological plane. Since culture affects all of the participants involved in the interview, both the interviewer and the candidate have thresholds of cultural ability (as one moves up the scale) and may feel culturally constrained or confident to elicit or answer certain types of questions. Instructors of Russian in the United States fall into four broad categories: (a) "old" immigration, (b) recent immigration, (c) native Americans who have spent a considerable amount of time in the USSR, and (d) native Americans who have spent little or no time in the USSR. Each of these interviewer groups can potentially bring to the interview their particular view of Russian or Soviet culture, mannerisms, etc., and, therefore, a specific elicitation technique with all its cultural implications. As a result, a student may either feel intimidated by the "Soviet approach" or the sample may be unratable because the interview was conducted totally from the American point of view. In addition, the question at which level does one test for culture in Russian has not yet been addressed and no guidelines exist for implementation.

Expected Levels of Absolute Speaking Proficiency in Languages Taught at the Foreign Service Institute

The School of Language Studies of the Foreign Service Institute has published a chart of speaking proficiency for a student with a given aptitude, in a given language, after a given number of weeks (see p. 23). According to this chart, it is not a myth that Russian takes longer to "learn" than other languages such as Spanish, French, or German. The figures listed below have been taken from the above mentioned chart. The number of weeks listed for these figures is based on the theoretical maximum of 30 hours per week assuming that the students' aptitude for language learning is average.

	Number of Weeks	Level Achieved
French	8	1/1+
	16	2
	24	2+
Russian	16	1
	24	2
	44	2+

As teachers of Russian we may have the tendency to rate our students higher than we should. It is imperative that we be aware of this situation. We would like our students to be as proficient in Russian at a particular college level as students of other languages; however, we must be aware of the fact that it may not be possible. We cannot compensate for the so-called difficulty of Russian by rating high.

Language Proficiency of the Interviewer

The language proficiency of the interviewer is a rather sensitive question; however, it is one which must be answered before the Slavic profession can utilize this type of interview on a large scale for a ationally standardized evaluation procedure. It is not a secret that many of our college level instructors may themselves not be rated above 2+ or 3. Who will test our future testers? What should be the minimum level of language proficiency for a tester? Should a 2+ or a 3 tester be testing 2 or even 2+ students? These types of questions have not been dealt with sufficiently and must be answered before testing in Russian can evolve.

Examples of Russian Specific Situations

(1) This is your first day in Leningrad. You are at a kiosk and want to buy a few items: city map, transportation map, stamps, postcards, newspaper, etc. You want to look at the items and find out how much they cost and how much is the total.

(2) You have a one ruble note. You must call a friend from a public telephone and therefore you need a 2 kopeck piece or two 1 kopeck pieces. Stop a person on the street and ask him/her to change it for you.

(3) At the customs control counter at the Moscow airport explain why you are bringing in six pairs of jeans/wearing apparel for the opposite sex/ books by a dissident writer published in the west.

(4) The concierge on your floor accuses you of stealing one of the towels in your room. Extricate yourself from this situation as gracefully as you can.

(5) You want to go to one of the better restaurants of (Moscow) proper. You strayed from the group and the bus has left. Inquire about means of getting back to your hotel in the center of (Moscow).

(6) A Soviet exchange student is studying at your university. Interview him/her for your school newspaper.

(7) Upon arrival in a foreign country, you find that you have lost your passport. Ask the passport control agent what must be done. Ask if he can call your embassy for you.

(8) You arrive at your foreign dormitory after the doors have been locked. Explain to the concierge why you are late and convince him/her that you do live in this dormitory (complication: you have lost your pass) and that you should be admitted.

(9) Inquire at a movie theater (or by phone) what film(s) are showing, who the actors are, how long the film lasts, when there are showings. Ask for two tickets in the 12th row center for a particular showing.

(10) Explain to the concierge on your floor that you are ill and require immediate medical/dental care. Ask her to call first aid. Ask how long you may expect to have to wait.

(11) Extricate yourself from an encounter with a black marketeer who wishes to sell you an icon/sell you old books/buy your jeans.

(12) Advise a recent Soviet immigrant what to see/visit in the United States your home town.

IV. Models and Instruments

In this section, the models and instruments used in familiarization and training workshops are presented. A brief description of each follows:

1. Language Proficiency Scales (page 16):

This model graphically represents the correspondence between the Interagency Language Roundtable Scale (on the left), which is used by the government, and the ACTFL/ETS Scale (on the right), which is designed for use in academic situations. Levels are identified by names that are defined in the ILR Speaking Definitions (page 17 ff.) and the Academic (ACTFL/ETS) Rating Scale (page 19 ff.). The model is intentionally designed in the shape of a cone to emphasize the increasing amount of language proficiency required for progression to higher levels.

2. ILR Speaking Definitions. (page 17)

These definitions describe the language behaviors expected at each level of the Interagency Language Roundtable Scale. The underlined portions summarize the primary descriptors.

3. Academic (ACTFL/ETS) Rating Scale. (page 19)

These definitions describe the language behaviors expected at each level of the ACTFL/ETS Scale. It should be noted that the levels in this scale are subdivided and that definitions are provided for each of the subdivisions. As illustrated in the model on page 16, names and not S(peaking)-numbers are used in the ACTFL/ETS Scale.

4. Functional Trisection of Oral Proficiency Levels. (page 22)

This model illustrates how, at each level of the scale, oral proficiency is divided into Function (tasks accomplished, attitudes expressed, tone conveyed), Content (topics, subject areas, activities and

jobs addressed), and Accuracy (acceptability, quality and accuracy of message conveyed). Descriptions are provided for each level in each of the three areas of the trisection.

5. Function/Content/Accuracy. (pages 23-25)

These figures expand on the descriptions given in the Functional Trisection of Oral Proficiency Levels (page 22). They are the primary descriptors by which a level of proficiency is determined.

6. Expected Levels of Speaking Proficiency. (page 26)

This chart, which is distributed by the School of Language Studies of the Foreign Service Institute, summarizes the average expected proficiency levels associated with length of training in four groups of languages.

7. The Four Phases of the Oral Interview. (page 27)

The oral interview consists of four distinct phases. The purposes and procedures of each phase are described in this figure.

8. General Structure of the Interview. (page 28)

This figure illustrates the four phases (Warm-up, Level Check, Probes, and Wind-up) and the three planes (Psychological, Linguistic, and Evaluative) of the interview.

9. Question Types. (page 29)

This figure describes what candidtes should be able to do at each level of the ACTFL/ETS Scale and suggests appropriate question types.

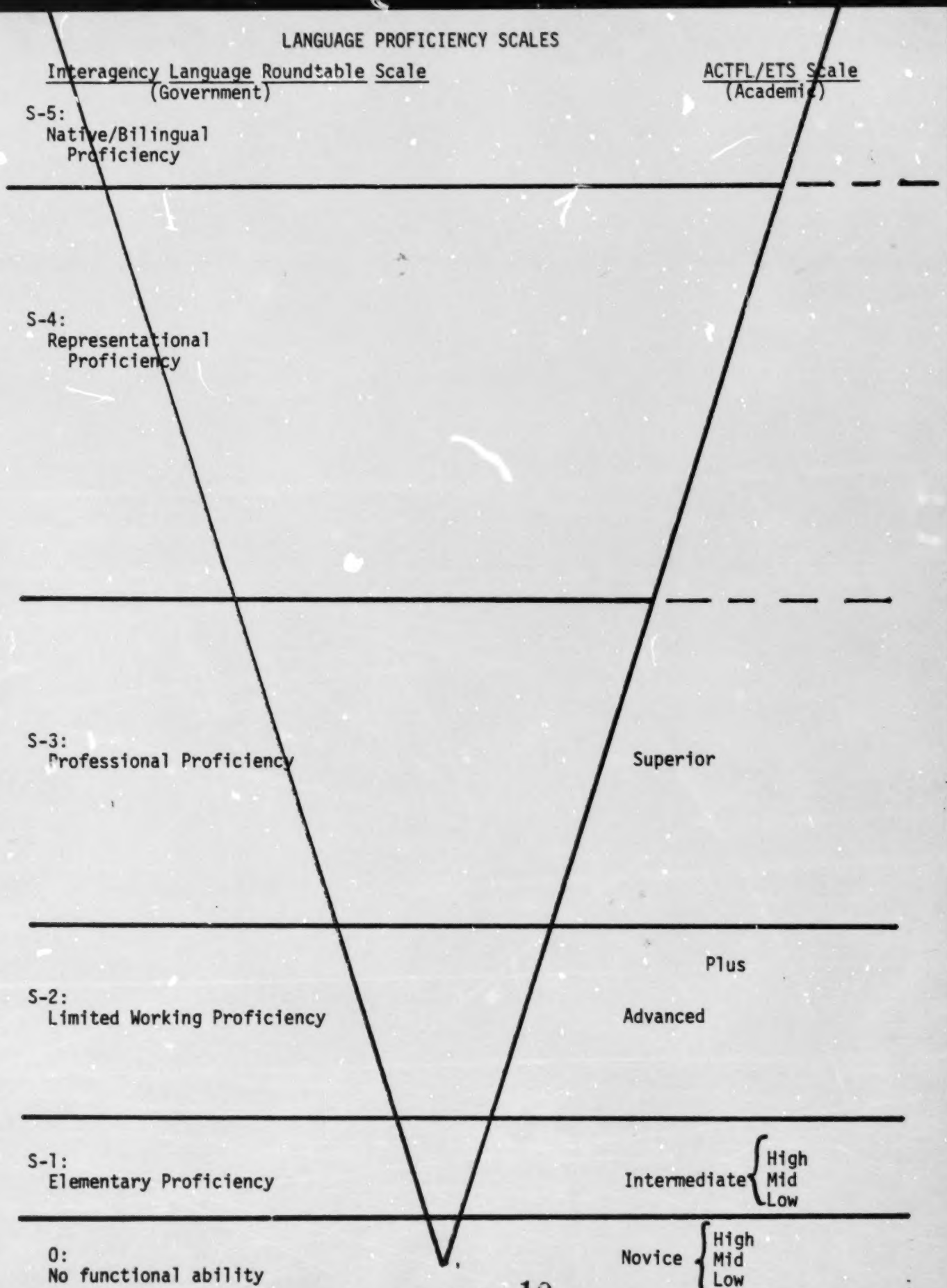
10. Testing Protocol (pages 30-31)

In this figure, a checklist for each level of the ACTFL/ETS Scale is provided to assist interviewers in structuring the interview.

11. ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines: Generic Guidelines.
(pages 32-41)

These Guidelines were prepared by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to provide proficiency descriptors in the four skills of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. The entries describe the types of language behavior appropriate to each of the levels of the scale in each of the four skills.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCALES



ILR SPEAKING DEFINITIONS

ELEMENTARY PROFICIENCY

S-1 Able to satisfy routine travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements. Can ask and answer questions on very familiar topics; within the scope of the very limited language experience can understand simple questions and statements, allowing for slowed speech, repetition or paraphrases; speaking vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs; errors in pronunciation and grammar are frequent, but can be understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners attempting to speak the language; while topics which are "very familiar" and elementary needs vary considerably from individual to individual, any person at the S-1 level should be able to order a simple meal, ask for shelter or lodging, ask for simple directions, make purchases and tell time.

LIMITED WORKING PROFICIENCY

S-2 Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family and autobiographical information; can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties; has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough control of grammar.

PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY

S-3 Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease; comprehension is quite complete for a normal rate of speech; vocabulary is broad enough that he rarely has to grope for a word; accent may be obviously foreign; control of grammar good; errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

REPRESENTATIONAL PROFICIENCY

S-4 Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. Can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of own personal and professional experience with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary; would rarely be taken for a native speaker, but can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations; errors of pronunciation and grammar quite rare; can handle informal interpreting from and into the language.

NATIVE OR BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY

S-5 Speaking proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker. Has complete fluency in the language such that speech on all levels is fully accepted by educated native speakers in all of its features, including breadth of vocabulary and idiom, colloquialisms, and pertinent cultural references.

ACADEMIC (ACTFL/ETS) RATING SCALE

NO ABILITY WHATSOEVER IN THE LANGUAGE	0
Unable to function in the spoken language. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words. Essentially no communication ability.	NOVICE LOW
Able to operate only in a very limited capacity within very predictable areas of need. Vocabulary limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae. Syntax is fragmented, inflections and word endings frequently omitted, confused or distorted and the majority of utterances consist of isolated words or short formulae. Utterances do not show evidence of creating with language or being able to cope with the simplest situations. They are marked by repetition of an interlocutor's words as well as by frequent long pauses. Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible and is strongly influenced by first language. Can be understood only with difficulty, even by persons such as teachers who are used to speaking with non-native speakers.	NOVICE MID
Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances. There is no real autonomy of expression, although there are some emerging signs of spontaneity and flexibility. There is a slight increase in utterance length but frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor's words may still occur. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only where this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. Most utterances are telegraphic and word endings are often omitted, confused or distorted. Vocabulary is limited to areas of immediate survival need. Can produce most phonemes but when they are combined in words or groups of words, errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, may severely inhibit communication even with persons used to dealing with such learners. Little development in stress and intonation is evident.	NOVICE HIGH

Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements, and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations. When asked to do so, is able to formulate some questions with limited constructions and much inaccuracy. Almost every utterance contains fractured syntax and other grammatical errors. Vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs. Strong interference from L1 occurs in articulation, stress, and intonation. Misunderstandings frequently arise from limited vocabulary and grammar and erroneous phonology but, with repetition, can generally be understood by native speakers in regular contact with foreigners attempting to speak their language. Little precision in information conveyed owing to tentative state of grammatical development and little or no use of modifiers.	INTER-MEDIATE LOW
Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands. Some evidence of grammatical accuracy in basic constructions, e.g., subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, some notion of inflections. Vocabulary permits discussion of topics beyond basic survival needs, e.g., personal history, leisure time activities. Is able to formulate some questions when asked to do so.	INTER-MEDIATE MID
Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Developing flexibility in a range of circumstances beyond immediate survival needs. Shows spontaneity in languge production but fluency is very uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation but has little understanding of the social conventions of conversation. The commoner tense forms occur but errors are frequent in formation and selection. Can use most question forms. While some word order is established, errors still occur in more complex patterns. Cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances or unfamiliar situations. Ability to describe and give precise information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features (e.g., pronouns, verb inflections), but many are unreliable, especially if less immediate in reference. Extended discourse is largely a series of short, discrete utterances. Articulation is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners, and can combine most phonemes with reasonable comprehensibility, but still has difficulty in producing certain sounds, in certain positions, or in certain combinations, and speech will usually be labored. Still has to repeat utterances frequently to be understood by the general public. Able to produce narration in either past or future.	INTER-MEDIATE HIGH

Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties. Has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.	ADVANCED
Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under tension or pressure languge may break down. Weaknesses or uneveneness in one of the foregoing or in pronunciation result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range from simple constructions such as plurals, articles, prepositions, and negatives to more complex structures such as tense usage, passive constructions, word order and relative clauses. Normally controls general vocabulary with some groping for everyday vocabulary still evident.	ADVANCED PLUS
ALL PERFORMANCE ABOVE ADVANCED PLUS IS RATED AS SUPERIOR	SUPERIOR

FUNCTIONAL TRISECTION OF ORAL PROFICIENCY LEVELS

Oral Proficiency Level	Function (Tasks accomplished, attitudes expressed, tone conveyed)	Context (Topics, subjects areas, activities and jobs addressed)	Accuracy (Acceptability, quality and accuracy of message conveyed)
5 (Superior)	Functions equivalent to an educated native speaker (ENS).	All subjects.	Performance equivalent to an ENS.
4 (Superior)	Able to tailor language to fit audience, counsel, persuade, negotiate, represent a point of view and interpret for dignitaries.	All topics normally pertinent to professional needs.	Nearly equivalent to an ENS. Speech is extensive, precise, appropriate to every occasion with only occasional errors.
3 (Superior)	Can converse in formal and informal situations, resolve problem situations, deal with unfamiliar topics, provide explanations, describe in detail, offer supported opinions, and hypothesize.	Practical, social professional and abstract topics, particular interests, and special fields of competence.	Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. Only sporadic errors in basic structur
2 (Advanced)	Able to fully participate in casual conversations, can express facts, give instructions, describe, report, and provide narration about current, past and future activities.	Concrete topics such as own backgroumd, family, interests, work, travel, and current events.	Understandable to native speaker <u>not</u> used to dealing with foreigners sometimes miscommunicates.
1 (Intermediate)	Can create with the language, ask and answer questions, participate in short conversations.	Everyday survival topics and courtesy requirements.	Intelligible to native speaker used to dealing with foreigners.
0*	No functional ability	None.	Unintelligible.

*Novice Level is not discussed here.

FUNCTIONS

4 (Superior)	Repesents point of view Negotiates Persuades Counsels Tailors language to audience
3 (Superior)	Handles unfamiliar topics or situations Hypothesizes Provides supported opinion
2 (Advanced)	Gets into, through and out of survival situations with a complication Narrates Decribes
1 (Intermediate)	Gets into, through and out of survival situations simply Asks questions Answers questions Creates
0+ (Novice High)	Communicates with memorized material
0 (0, Novice Low, Novice Mid)	Has no functional ability

CONTEXT/CONTENT

4 (Superior)	All nontechnical situations Any conversations within the range of personal or professional experiences All topics normally pertinent to professional needs and social of a general nature
3 (Superior)	Expression and defense of opinions about current events and similar topics Most formal and informal conversations Practical, social, professional and abstract topics Particular interests and special fields of competence
2 (Advanced)	Recreational activities Limited work requirements Most social situtions including introductions Concrete topics such as own background, family and interests, work, travel and current events
1 (Intermediate)	Simple question-and-answer situations Familiar topics within scope of very limited languge experience Routine travel needs Minimum courtesy requirements Everday survival topics
0+ (Novice High)	Basic subjects Colors Clothing Family members Weather Weekdays Months Day's date Time
0 (Novice Low, Novice Mid)	Some of the 0+ subject areas (above)

ACCURACY

4 (Superior)	Only occasional unpatterned errors Nearly perfect grammar Errors of grammar quite rare
3 (Superior)	Occasional errors in low-frequency structures Occasional errors in the most complex frequent structures Only sporadic errors in basic structures Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker Control of grammar good
2 (Advanced)	Joining sentences in limited discourse Good control of morphology of the language (in inflected languages) and of the most frequently used syntactic structures Elementary constructions usually handled quite accurately, but does not have a thorough or confident control of grammar Some miscommunication Understandable to a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners
1 (Intermediate)	Normally errors made even in constructions which are quite simple and common Errors in pronunciation and grammar frequent Intelligible to a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners
0 (Novice)	No functional ability (some intelligibility expected)

EXPECTED LEVELS OF ABSOLUTE SPEAKING PROFICIENCY
IN LANGUAGES TAUGHT AT THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE
(Revised April 1973)

This chart was drawn up by the School of Language Studies of the Foreign Service Institute. It summarizes our experience with students as taught in our own classes rather than our judgments about the relative difficulty of these languages for speakers of English though there is undoubtedly some correlation. The expected speaking proficiency for a student with a given background and a given aptitude, in a given language, after a given number of weeks, will depend not only on the difficulty of the spoken language itself, but also on the amount of time and effort that the student has had to spend in concurrent study of the writing system.

GROUP I: Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Haitian, Creole, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish

Length of Training*	Aptitude for Language Learning		
	Minimum	Average	Superior
8 weeks (240 hours)	1	1/1+	1+
16 weeks (480 hours)	1+	2	2+
24 weeks (720 hours)	2	2+	3

GROUP II: Bulgarian, Dari, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Malay, Urdu

Length of Training	Aptitude for Language Learning		
	Minimum	Average	Superior
16 weeks (480 hours)	1	1/1+	1+/2
24 weeks (720 hours)	1+	2	2/2+
44 weeks (1320 hours)	2/2+	2+/3	3/3+

GROUP III: Amharic, Bengali, Burmese, Czech, Finnish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Khmer (Cambodian), Lao, Nepali, Philipno, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Sinhala, Thai, Tamil, Turkish, Vietnamese

Length of Training	Aptitude for Language Learning		
	Minimum	Average	Superior
16 weeks (480 hours)	0+	1	1/1+
24 weeks (720 hours)	1+	2	2/2+
44 weeks (1320 hours)	2	2+	3

GROUP IV: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean

Length of Training	Aptitude for Language Learning		
	Minimum	Average	Superior
16 weeks (480 hours)	0+	1	1
24 weeks (720 hours)	1	1+	1+
44 weeks (1320 hours)	1+	2	2+
80-92 weeks (2400-2760 hours)	2+	3	3+

*The number of hours is the theoretical maximum at 30 hours a week.

The Four Phases of the Oral Interview

I. WARM-UP

Purposes:
1. Put candidate at ease
2. Reacquaint candidate with language
3. Give interviewer preliminary indication of candidate's level

Procedure:
1. Introductions
2. Social amenities

II. LEVEL CHECK

Purpose:
1. Find the highest level at which candidate can sustain a speaking performance

Procedure:
1. Questions that indicate that candidate can perform functions of the estimated level with suitable content and accuracy
2. Determine floor of performance: what candidate can do consistently

III. PROBES

Purpose:
1. To verify that the level the interviewer has been checking is the candidate's highest sustained level

Procedure:
1. Questions that take the candidate above a previous level several times in different ways
2. Provides clear examples of linguistic breakdown: shows what candidate cannot do

IV. WIND-DOWN

Purpose:
1. Leave candidate with a feeling of accomplishment after stretching the speaking ability to the limit
2. Final chance for tester to resolve any remaining questions about rating.

Procedure
1. Questions at highest sustained level
2. Expression of appreciation and leave-taking

GENERAL STRUCTURE

FOUR PHASES:	WARM UP	LEVEL CHECK	PROBES	WIND-UP
THREE PLANES:		(iterative process)		
PSYCHOLOGICAL:	Puts a candidate at ease	Proves to candidate what he or she can do	Proves to candidate what he or she cannot do	Returns candidate to level at which he or she functions most accurately Gives candidate feeling of accomplishment
LINGUISTIC: LS HANDBOOK ON QUESTION TYPES FSI LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	Reacquaints candidate with language if necessary	Checks for functions and content which candidate performs with greatest accuracy	Checks for functions and content which candidate performs with least accuracy	(Chance to check that the iterative process is complete)
EVALUATIVE VERBAL REFLECTIONS	Gives testers preliminary indication of level of speech and understanding skills	Finds candidates's S- Level Finds candidate's U-Level	Finds level at which candidate can no longer speak accurately Finds level at which candidate can no longer understand accurately	(Gives global rating)

QUESTION TYPES IN RELATION TO CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE
(CAPSULE CHARACTERIZATION)

ACTFL/ETS LEVEL	ILR LEVEL	CANDIDATE	TECHNIQUE
NOVICE	0 - 0+	SINGLE WORDS MEMORIZED MATERIAL RECYCLES MATERIAL FROM TESTERS BAREST COMMUNICATION	*PROPS *YES/NO QUESTIONS *CHOICE QUESTIONS
INTERMEDIATE	1 - 1+	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS PAINFUL PAUSES	PROPS *POLITE REQUEST *INFORMATION QUESTIONS *S-I SITUATIONS *CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS TESTERS *ASK & TELL
ADVANCED	2 - 2+	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SOME DESCRIPTION SOME NARRATION PRODUCTIVE PAUSES SOME POLITE GAP FILLERS	INFORMATION QUESTIONS S-I SITUATIONS WITH COMPLICATIONS *REPHRASABLE QUESTIONS *(HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS)
		FACT QUESTIONS / OPINION QUESTIONS	
SUPERIOR	3	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FULL DESCRIPTION FULL NARRATION CORE GRAMMAR BASICALLY CORRECT SOME CIRCUMLOCUTION IN VOCABULARY SOME SUPPORTED OPINION	INFORMATION QUESTIONS REPHRASABLE QUESTIONS *UNFAMILIAR SITUATIONS *HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS *DESCRIPTIVE PRELUDE QUESTIONS INFO PASS
	4	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS EXTENSIVE DESCRIPTION EXTENSIVE NARRATION PRECISE VOCABULARY & IDIOMS FULL SUPPORTED OPINION	INFORMATION QUESTIONS REPHRASABLE QUESTIONS UNFAMILIAR SITUATIONS CALLING FOR TAILORING LANGUAGE HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS DESCRIPTIVE PRELUDE QUESTIONS *CONVERSATIONAL PRELUDE QUESTIONS

*SIGNIFIES NEW QUESTION TYPE

()SIGNIFIES A TYPE WHICH MAY APPLY TO A GIVEN LEVEL DEPENDING ON THE LANGUAGE

TESTING PROTOCOL

LEVEL 0+: Tried to have conversation? ___

Covered 0+ Subject Areas: Which?

Basic objects	___	Months	___
Basic colors	___	Time	___
Clothing	___	Weather	___
Day's date	___	Weekdays	___
Family members	___		

Level 1: Tried to have conversation? ___

Checked for minimum courtesy requirements? ___

Checked that he can handle simple situations of daily life and travel (S-2 Situations)? ___

Had him ask you questions? ___

Tried props when conversation fails? ___

Probed for past tense(s) and future? ___

Level 2: Checked how he can satisfy routine social demands? ___
Checked how he talks about autobiographical information? ___
Checked how he talks about current events? ___
Checked how he uses basic structures? ___
Checked how he uses more complex structures? ___
Checked for description? ___
Checked for narration, particularly in past and future? ___
Checked how he handles simple situations of daily life and travel (S-1 Situations?) ___
Checked how he joins sentences in connected discourse? ___
Probed for how he handles an unknown topic or situation? ___
Probed for supported opinion? ___

LEVEL 3:	Checked both everyday and abstract subject matter?	___
	Placed him in unfamiliar situations and topics?	___
	Checked his control of grammar?	___
	Checked for supported opinion?	___
	Checked for description?	___
	Checked for narration?	___
	Checked how he uses low-frequency structures?	___
	Checked how he uses complex structures?	___
	Checked for broad vocabulary?	___
	Checked how he answers hypothetical questions?	___
LEVEL 4:	Checked both everyday and abstract subject matter?	___
	Placed him in unfamiliar situations and topics?	___
	Checked his control of grammar?	___
	Checked for supported opinion?	___
	Checked for description?	___
	Checked for narration?	___
	Checked how he uses low-frequency structures?	___
	Checked how he uses complex structures?	___
	Checked for broad vocabulary?	___
	Checked for how he answers hypothetical questions?	___
	Checked how he handles an unknown situation?	___
	Checked how he tailors his speech to his audience(s)?	___
LEVEL 5:	Checked both everyday and abstract subject areas?	___
	Checked for high-level colloquialisms?	___
	Checked for pertinent cultural references?	___
	Checked his ability to converse freely and idiomatically in his special fields?	___
	Checked that he speaks and sounds like an educated native speaker in all that he says?	___
	Checked how he handles unknown situations and topics?	___

ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines: Generic Description

Provisional Generic Descriptions - Speaking

Novice-Low Unable to function in the spoken languge. Oral production is limited to occasional isolated words. Essentially no communicative ability.

Novice-Mid Able to operate only in a very limited capacity within very predictable areas of need. Vocabulary limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae. Syntax is fragmented, inflections and word endings frequently omitted, confused or distorted and the majority of utterances consist of isolated words or short formulae. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and are marked by frequent long pauses and repetitions of an interlocutor's words. Pronunciation is frequently unintelligible and is strongly influenced by first language. Can be understood only with difficulty, even by persons such as teaches who are used to speaking with non-native speakers or in interactions where the context strongly supports the utterance.

Novice-High Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only where this involves short memorized utterances or formulae. There is no real autonomy of expression, although there may be some emerging signs of spontaneity and flexibility. There is a slight increase in utterance length but frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor's words still occur. Most utterances are telegraphic and word endings are often omitted, confused or distorted. Vocabulary is limited to areas of immediate survival needs. Can differentiate most phonemes when produced in isolation but when they are combined in words or groups of words, errors are frequent and, even with repetition, may severely inhibit communication even with persons used to dealing with such learners. Little development in stress and intonation is evident.

Intermediate Low Able to satisfy basic surival needs and minimum courtesy requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can ask and answer simple questions, initite and respond to simple statements, and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations. When asked to do so, is able to formulate some questions with limited constructions and much inaccuracy. Almost every utterance contains fractured syntax and other grammatical errors. Vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs. Strong interference from native language occurs in articulation,

	stress and intonation. Misunderstandings frequently arise from limited vocabulary and grammar and erroneous phonology but, with repetition, can generally be understood by native speakers in regular contact with foreigners attempting to speak their language. Little precision in information conveyed owning to tentative state of grammatical development and little or no use of modifiers.
Intermediate Mid	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands. Is able to formulate some questions when asked to do so. Vocabulary permits discussion of topics beyond basic survival needs such as personal history and leisure time activities. Some evidence of grammatical accuracy in basic constructions, for example, subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, some notion of inflection.
Intermediate High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Shows some spontaneity in languge production but fluency is very uneven. Can initiate and sustain a general conversation but has little understanding of the social conventions of conversation. Developing flexibility in a range of circumstances beyond immediate survival needs. Limited vocabulary range necessitates much hesitation and circumlocution. The commoner tense forms occur but errors are frequent in formation and selection. Can use most question forms. While some word order is established, errors still occur in more complex patterns. Cannot sustain coherent structures in longer utterances or unfamiliar situations. Ability to describe and give precise information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features such as pronouns and verb inflections, but many are unreliable, especially if less immediate in reference. Extended discourse is largely a series of short, discrete utterances. Articulation is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners, and can combine most phonemes with reasonable comprehensibility, but still has difficulty in producing certain sounds, in certain positions, or in certain combinations, and speech will usually be labored. Still has to repeat utterances frequently to be understood by the general public. Able to produce some narration in either past or future.
Advanced	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information; can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties. Has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.

Advanced Plus	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses or unevenness in one of the foregoing or in pronunciation result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range from simple constructions such as plurals, articles, prepositions, and negatives to more complex structures such as tense usage, passive constructions, word order, and relative clauses. Normally controls general vocabulary with some groping for everyday vocabulary still evident. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under tension or pressure language may break down.
Superior	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Vocabulary is broad enough that speaker rarely has to grope for a word; accent may be obviously foreign; control of grammer good; errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

Provisional Generic Descriptors - Listening

Novice-Low	No practical understanding of the spoken language. Understanding limited to occasional isolated words, such as cognates, borrowed words, and high frequency social conventions. Essentially no ability to comprehend even short utterances.
Novice-Mid	Sufficient comprehension to understand some memorized words within predictable areas of need. Vocabulary for comprehension limited to simple elementary needs and basic courtesy formulae. Utterances understood rarely exceed more than two or three words at a time and ability to understand is characterized by long pauses for assimilation and by repeated requests on the listener's part for repetition, and/or a slower rate of speech. Confuses words that sound similar.
Novice-High	Sufficient comprehension to understand a number of memorized utterances in areas of immediate need. Comprehends slightly longer utterances in situations where the context aids understanding, such as at the table, in a restaurant/store, in a train/bus. Phrases recognized have for the most part been memorized. Comprehends vocabulary common to daily needs. Comprehends simple questions/statements about family members, age, address, weather, time, daily activities and interests.

	Misunderstandings arise from failure to perceive critical sounds or endings. Understands even standard speech with difficulty but gets some main ideas. Often requires repetition and/or a slowed rate of speech for comprehension, even when listening to persons such as teachers who are used to speaking with non-natives.
Intermeidate Low	Sufficient comprehension to understand utterances about basic survival needs, minimum courtesy and travel requirements. In areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, can understand non-memorized material, such as simple questions and answers, statements, and face-to-face conversations in the standard language. Comprehension areas include basic needs: meals, lodging, transportation, time, simple instructions (e.g., route directions) and routine commands (e.g., from customs officials, police). Understands main ideas. Misunderstandings frequently arise from lack of vocabulary or faulty processing of syntactic information often caused by strong interference from the native language or by the imperfect and partial acquisition of the target grammar.
Intermediate Mid	Sufficient comprehension to understand simple conversations about most survival needs and limited social conventions. Vocabulary permits understanding of topics beyond basic survival needs such as personal history and leisure time activities. Evidence of understanding basic constructions, for example, subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement; evidence that some inflection is understood.
Intermediate High	Sufficient comprehension to understand short conversations about most survival needs and limited social conventions. Increasingly able to understand topics beyond immediate survival needs. Shows spontaneity in understanding, but speed and consistency of understanding uneven. Limited vocabulary range necessitates repetition for understanding. Understands commoner tense forms and some word order patterns, including most question forms, but miscommunication still occurs with more complex patterns. Can get the gist of conversations, but cannot sustain comprehension in longer utterances or in unfamiliar situations. Understanding of descriptions and detailed information is limited. Aware of basic cohesive features such as pronouns and verb inflections, but many are unreliably understood, especially if other material intervenes. Understanding is largely limited to a series of short, discrete utterances. Still has to ask for utterances to be repeated. Some ability to understand the facts.

Advanced	Sufficient comprehension to understand conversations about routine social conventions and limited school or work requirements. Able to understand face-to-face speech in the standard language, delivered at a normal rate with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners. Understands everyday topics, common personal and family news, well-known current events, and routine matters involving school or work; descriptions and narration about current, past, and future events; and essential points of discussion or speech at an elementary level on topics in special fields of interest.
Advanced Plus	Sufficient comprehension to understand most routine conventions, conversations on school or work requirements, and discussions on concrete topics related to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable ability and ease of understanding, but comprehension may break down under tension or pressure, including unfavorable listening conditions. Candidate may display weakness or deficiency due to inadequate vocabulary base or less than secure knowledge of grammar and syntax. Normally understands general vocabulary with some hesitant understanding of everyday vocabulary still evident. Can sometimes detect emotional overtones. Some ability to understand between the lines, i.e., to make inferences.
Superior	Sufficient comprehension to understand the essentials of all speech in standard dialects, including technical discussions within a special field. Has sufficient understanding of face-to-face speech, delivered with normal clarity and speed in standard language, on general topics and areas of special interest; understands hypothesizing and supported opinions. Has broad enough vocabulary that rarely has to ask for paraphrasing or explanation. Can follow accurately the essentials of conversations between educated native speakers, reasonably clear telephone calls, radio broadcasts, standard news items, oral reports, some oral technical reports, and public addresses on non-technical subjects. May not understand native speakers if they speak very quickly or use some slang or unfamiliar dialect. Can often detect emotional overtones. Can understand "between the lines" (i.e., make inferences).

Provisional Generic Descriptions - Reading

Novice-Low	No functional ability in reading the foreign language.

Novice-Mid	Sufficient understanding of the written language to interpret highly contextualized words or cognates within predictable areas. Vocabulary for comprehension limited to simple elementary needs such as names, addresses, dates, street signs, building names, short informative signs (e.g., no smoking, entrance/exit) and formulaic vocabulary requesting same. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase and comprehension requires successive reading and checking.
Novice-High	Sufficient comprehension of the written languge to interpret set expressions in areas of immediate need. Can recognize all the letters in the printed version of an alphabetic system and high-frequency elements of a syllabary or a character system. Where vocabulary has been mastered can read for instruction and directional purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps and signs indicating hours of operation, social codes, and traffic regulations. This material is ready only for essential information. Detail is overlooked or misunderstood.
Intermediate Low	Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form the simplest connected material, either authentic or specially prepared, dealing with basic survival and social needs. Able to understand both mastered material and recombinations of the mastered elements that achieve meanings at the same level. Understands main ideas in material whose structures and syntax parallel the native language. Can read messages, greetings, statements of social amenities or other simple language containing only the highest frequency grammatical patterns and vocabulary items including cognates (if appropriate). Misunderstandings arise when syntax diverges from that of the native language or when grammatical cues are overlooked.
Intermediate Mid	Sufficient comprehension to understand in printed form simple discourse for informative or social purposes. In response to perceived needs can read for information material such as announcements of public events, popular advertising, notes containing biographical information or narration of events, and straightforward newspaper headlines and story lines. Can guess at unfamiliar vocabulary if highly contextualized. Relies primarily on adverbs as time indicators. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. May have to read material several times before understanding.

Intermediate High	Sufficient comprehension to understand a simple paragraph for personal communication, information or recreational purposes. Can read with understanding social notes, letters and invitations; can locate and derive main ideas of the introductory/ summary paragraphs from high interest or familiar news or other informational sources; can read for pleasure specially prepared, or some uncomplicated authentic prose, such as fictional narratives or cultural information. Shows spontaneity in reading by ability to guess at meaning from context. Understands common time indicators and can interpret some cohesive factors such as objective pronouns and simple clause connectors. Begins to relate sentences in the discourse to advance meaning, but cannot sustain understanding of longer discourse on unfamiliar topics. Misinterpretation still occurs with more complex patterns.
Advanced	Sufficient comprehension to read simple authentic material or edited textual material within a familiar context. Can read uncomplicated but authentic prose on familiar subjects containing description and narration such as news items describing frequently occurring events, simple biographic information, social notices, and standard business letters. Can read edited texts such as prose fiction and contemporary culture. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Can follow essential points of written discussion at level of main ideas and some supporting ones with topics in a field of interest or where background exists. Some misunderstandings. Able to read the facts but cannot draw inferences.
Advanced Plus	Sufficient comprehension to understand most factual information in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special intrests. Able to read for information and description, to follow sequence of events, and to react to that information. Is able to separate main ideas from lesser ones, and uses that division to advance understanding. Can locate and interpret main ideas and detalis in material written for the general public. Will begin to guess sensibly at new words by using linguistic context and prior knowledge. May react personally to material but does not yet detect subjective attitudes, values, or judgments in the writing.
Superior	Able to read standard newspaper items addressed to the general reader, routine correspondence reports and technical materials in a field of interest at a normal rate of speed (at least 220 wpm). Readers can gain new knowledge from material on unfamiliar topics in areas of a general nature. Can interpret hypotheses, supported opinions and conjectures.

Can also read short stories, novels, and other recreational literature accessible to the general public. Reading ability is not subject-matter dependent. Has broad enough general vocabulary that successful guessing resolves problems with complex structures and low-frequency idioms. Misreading is rare. Almost always produces correct interpretations. Able to read between the lines. May be able to appreciate nuance or stylistics.

Provisional Generic Descriptors - Writing

Novice-Low — No functional ability in writing the foreign language.

Novice-Mid — No practical communicative writing skills. Able to copy isolated words or short phrases. Able to transcribe previously studied words or phrases.

Novice-High — Able to write simple fixed expressions and limited memorized material. Can supply information when requested on forms such as hotel registrations and travel documents. Can write names, numbers, dates, one's own nationality, addresses, and other simple biographic information, as well as learned vocabulary, short phrases, and simple lists. Can write all the symbols in an alphabetic or syllabic system or 50 of the most common characters. Can write simple memorized material with frequent misspellings and inaccuracies.

Intermediate Low — Has sufficient control of the writing system to meet limited practical needs. Can write short messages, such as simple questions or notes, postcards, phone messages, and the like within the scope of limited language experience. Can take simple notes on material dealing with very familiar topics although memory span is extremely limited. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences. Vocabulary is inadequate to express anything but elementary needs. Writing tends to be a loosely organized collection of sentence fragments on a very familiar topic. Makes continual errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but writing can be read and understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners. Able to produce appropriately some fundamental sociolingusitic distinctions in formal and famliar style, such as appropriate subject pronouns, titles of address and basic social formuae.

Intermediate Mid — Sufficient control of writing system to meet some survival needs and some limited social demands. Able to compose short paragraphs or take simple notes on very familiar topics grounded in personal experience. Can discuss likes and

dislikes, daily routine, everyday events, and the like. Can express past time, using content words and time expressions, or with sporadically accurate verbs. Evidence of good control of basic constructions and inflections such a subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, and straightforward syntactic constructions in present or future time, though errors occasionally occur. May make frequent errors, however, when venturing beyond current level of linguistic competence. When resorting to a dictionary, often is unable to identify appropriate vocabulary, or uses dictionary entry in uninflected form.

Intermediate High — Sufficient control of writing system to meet most survival needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics, and respond to personal questions using elementary vocabulary and common structures. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data and work experience, and short compositions on familiar topics. Can create sentences and short paragraphs relating to most survival needs (food, lodging, transportation, immediate surroundings and situations) and limited social demands. Can relate personal history, discuss topics such as daily life, preferences, and other familiar material. Can express fairly accurately present and future time. Can produce some past verb forms, but not always accurately or with correct usage. Shows good control of elementary vocabulary and some control of basic syntactic patterns but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts. Dictionary usage may still yield incorrect vocabulary of forms, although can use a dictionary to advantage to express simple ideas. Generally cannot use basic cohesive elements of discourse to advantage such as relative constructions, subject pronouns, connectors, etc. Writing, though faulty, is comprehensible to native speakers used to dealing with foreigners.

Advanced — Able to write routine social correspondence and simple discourse of at least several paragraphs on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, and write cohesive summaries, resumes, and short narratives and descriptions on factual topics. Able to write about everyday topics using both description and narration. Has sufficient writing vocabulary to express himself/herself simply with some circumlocution. Can write about a very limited number of current events or daily situations and express personal preferences and observations in some detail, using basic structure. Still makes common errors in spelling and punctuation, but shows some control of the most common formats and punctuation conventions. Good control of the morphology of the language (in inflected languages) and of the most frequently used syntactic structures. Elementary

constructions are usually handled quite accurately, and writing is understandable to a native speaker not used to reading the writing of foreigners. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices such as pronouns and repeated words with good accuracy. Able to join sentences in limited discourse, but has difficulty and makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Paragraphs are reasonably unified and coherent.

Advanced Plus

Shows ability to write about most common toics with some precision and in some detail. Can write fairly detailed resumes and summaries and take quite accurate notes. Can write most social and informal business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences and explain simply points of view on prose discourse. Can write about concrete toics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Normally controls general vocabulary with some circumlocution. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of expression, but under time constraints and pressure language may be inaccurate and/or incomprehensible. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness range from simple constructions such as plurals, articles, prepositions, and negatives to more complex structures such as tense usage, passive constructions, word order, and relative clauses. Some misuse of vocabulary still evident. Shows a limited ability to use circumlocution. Uses dictionary to advantage to supply unknown words. Writing is understandable to native speakers not used to reading material written by non-natives, though the style is still obviously foreign.

Superior

Able to use the written language effectively in most formal and informal exchanges on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos and social and business letters, short research papers and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields. Can express hypotheses, conjectures, and present arguments on points of view accurately and effectively. Can write about areas of special interest and handle topics in special fields, in addition to most common topics. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling, and a wide general vocabulary allow the writer to convey his/her message accurately, though style may be foreign. Can use complex and compound sentence structures to express ideas clearly and coherently. Uses dictionary with a high degree of accuracy to supply specialized vocabulary. Errors, though sometimes made when usng more complex structures, are occasional, and rarely disturb the native speaker. Sporadic errors when using basic structures. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still cannot tailor writing precisely and accurately to a variety of audiences or styles.